

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO USDEL SECRETARY JERUSALEM NIACT IMMEDIATE

SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 4838

WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 3883

NODIS

JERUSALEM FOR SECRETARY

WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BRZEZKNSKI ONLY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PGOV, PINT, LE, IS

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON

REF: STATE 18748

1. IN THE ABSENCE OF THE AMBASSADOR WHO IS TRAVELING IN NORTHERN LEBANON, FOLLOWING IS COUNTRY TEAM ANALYSIS OF MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON AS REQUESTED REFTEL. WE WILL CONSULT FURTHER WITH OUR SOURCES AND SEND FOLLOW-UP REPORT TOMORROW.

2. ARTILLERY DUELS IN SOUTH LEBANON, AFTER DROPPING OFF SIGNIFICANTLY AT CONCLUSION OF SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN MID-JULY, BEGAN AGAIN IN EARNEST ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, AND HAVE INCREASED SINCE THEN. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO LATEST REPORTS WE HAVE, THE LEVEL IS NO WORSE THAN ON SEVERAL OTHER OCCASIONS DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS. ARTILLERY DUELS IN SOUTH LEBANON HAVE EBBED AND FLOWED DURING PAST SIX

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MONTHS AND LAST MONTH IS NO EXCEPTION. LAST SERIOUS MOVEMENT ON THE GROUND WAS ATTACK ON YARIN APPROXIMATELY ONE MONTH AGO WHICH INVOLVED NO MORE THAN PLATOON-SIZE UNIT, I.E., APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-FOUR MEN. SINCE THEN GROUND ACTION HAS CONSISTED ONLY OF SQUAD-SIZED PROBES.

3. WE HAVE NO REPORTS THAT PALESTINIAN MILITARY PRESSURE IS BUILDING ON CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. AFTER SHTAURA AGREEMENT IN MID-JULY, MANY PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS MOVED TO THE ARQUB, AS REQUIRED BY 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT. WHEN THEIR BASES THERE WERE SHELLED, SOME MOVED BACK TO NABATIYAH AREA, BUT WE ARE AWARE OF NO RPT NO MASSING NEAR CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES.

4. SOME REJECTIONISTS WHO HAVE NOT REPEAT NOT ACCEPTED SHTAURA AGREEMENT HAVE BEEN PARTICIPATING IN ARTILLERY DUELS BUT MOST PLO/FATAH FORCES AS WELL AS OTHER REJECTIONIST UNITS HAVE BEEN DISENGAGING IN SOUTH LEBANON TO BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, PLO/FATAH REGULAR FORCES TEND TO COOPERATE WITH REJECTIONISTS ONLY WHEN THEY ARE ATTACKED.

5. THERE ARE SOME REPORTS THAT SYRIAN ADF FORCES HAVE RECENTLY ALLOWED PALESTINIANS TO MOVE SOME LIGHT ARMS, SUCH AS MACHINE GUNS AND MORTARTS, OUT OF REFUGEE CAMPS IN BEIRUT TO LOCATIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON. HOWEVER, THIS MATERIAL DOES NOT REPEAT NOT SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES OF PALESTINIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH WHICH ALREADY HAVE SUFFICIENT ARMS OF THIS TYPE AND IS PART OF A PLANNED OPERATION THAT WAS WORKED OUT AS A RESULT OF THE SHTAURA AGREEMENT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO.

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